It's Showtime announced today that their 85kg World Title, previouly held by **Melvin Manhoef**, was now vacant. According to their official statement:

"Melvin Manhoef was in possession of this title from August 2009. However, due to various reasons he hasn't been able to defend his title. An IT'S SHOWTIME world champion has to defend his title within 1 year, and IT'S SHOWTIME is able to extend this period with another year. Because the term of maximum extension will end next August, we have decided to make this title vacant immediately."

This doesn't come as a big surprise - earlier this year I spoke with It's Showtime president Simon Rutz, who told me that Manhoef being stripped was indeed a possibility, especially since the champion had declared he likely would not compete for It's Showtime in 2011.

Manhoef won the belt in 2009, defeating Denes Racz to become the first 85kg champion. Since then, Manhoef has only fought for It's Showtime once - a 2010 fight with Gokhan Saki that took place outside the 85kg weight limit. In fact, Manhoef only has two kickboxing fights in that time, as he has been more focused on his MMA career.

While it's unfortunate to not see Manhoef competing, this is a good move. It's Showtime is really working on emphasizing their titles, and making sure that they are held by champions who will defend them. I'm glad they are sticking to their contractual promises regarding title defenses, and look forward to seeing what is next in this division. Now let's just hope we can get Orono back to defend his 65kg title soon.

Regarding the future of the belt, It's Showtime stated "We don't know yet when and between who the next 85kg max title fight will be. Also it is not an impossibility that Melvin will fight for this title in the future."